

QUANTA

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QLS
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SILVER JUBILEE YEAR

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Information on the Association

Membership of QUANTA, the independent QL user group, is by annual subscription. The Membership Secretary can supply full details. Copies of the association's constitution & annual accounts are available from the Secretary. There is an extensive software library. There are active national subgroups. Details are given in the Member's Guide and in this magazine.

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Well, here we are again at the beginning of a New Year for the QUANTA Committee. Initial views show that the changes to the QUANTA Constitution put into place a few years ago are already giving the results that were intended. The introduction of new committee members Alison Southern (Secretary) and Keith Dunbar (Web Site Administrator) has brought a 'freshness' to the committee while the retention of some longer standing members is providing continuity overall. We are still searching for up to three more committee members but we are looking for very specific skills like a new Magazine Editor to take your magazine even further forward and to relieve me of some of the work and responsibilities that I currently have. Similarly, although some of the committee jobs go 'hand-in-hand' with each other, it would be nice to feel that those committee members who are currently doing two or three jobs could have some respite by passing on some work to new blood.

Although your new Committee has only met once 'face-to-face' - immediately following the AGM at Allesley in April - they have settled down very quickly and there is a feeling of openness in their discussions. Sarah promises to make a very good chairman (although John Mason's chairmanship will be a very hard act to follow). She seems to have full control of the rest of the committee who are ready to listen to her words of guidance and the whole meeting was one of mutual respect and a number of new proposals were opened for discussion.

Alison, as her meeting précis indicates, has already got a grasp of what we are trying to do and is recording our views and comments most thoroughly making for a detailed précis to keep our members informed. I look forward to publishing her informative notes in the months to come.

There has already been a flurry of emails between Dan Abbott (Web Master) and Keith Dunbar (Web Admin) regarding the choice and introduction of one of three Content Management Systems which Dan has been reviewing over recent times. They hope to have some new features on our Web Site in the very near future.

As the following pages show, Dilwyn Jones has once again been keeping his nose to the ground - like any good news hound! - and has reported on a number of items of interest to us all. He is also making

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moves to improve our Helpline feature while the Software Library is likely to take on a new image before very long.

One thing that would make things easier for us all would be if we could rely on your regular feedback regarding all things QL. A new feature in this issue is one entitled "POINTS OF VIEW" and, as its name implies, contains comments from our members (and hopefully non-members too in the future) which will help us to improve the provision of our services to our membership. It need not be something which we can publish although it would be nice to let others know what you feel about the QL in general and QUANTA in particular. Drop us a line or give us a ring and share your views with us. Contact addresses (email and postal), telephone numbers etc. are inside the front cover.

Finally, our grateful thanks to all those who supported our Silver Jubilee events and for your open comments and ideas. It is nice to know that our efforts are appreciated and are worth while.

QUANTA COMMITTEE PRÉCIS Alison Southern

QUANTA AGM 2009

The QUANTA AGM 2009 at The Allesley Hotel got off to a good start with an attendance of over 20 people. The departing Chairman, Mr John Mason, addressed the meeting and commended the work that had been done on the web site over the last year. He recommended that the new committee should look further into putting back issues of the QUANTA magazine onto the web site. He then announced the award of a discretionary lifetime membership to Mr. Gil Lamb for his long and active membership of QUANTA.

A postal surcharge for overseas members had previously been agreed by the committee and this was accepted by the membership. QUANTA was complimented for keeping subscription levels the same for so many years and members were reminded that a downloadable version of the magazine is available and would save QUANTA a considerable amount in postage charges.

The Treasurer's report followed, as printed in an earlier issue of QUANTA Magazine and it was agreed to keep the same auditor next year.

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The membership report revealed that membership had remained similar over the last year and now stands at 175.

The meeting then moved on to elect the committee for 2009-10, the number of nominations not exceeding the number of positions all the nominees were elected.

All official business being dealt with the meeting was then opened to other matters. The issue was raised concerning the letter published in the last issue of QUANTA Magazine suggesting a merger of the QUANTA magazine and QL Today. John Mason had drawn up and circulated at the workshop a brief questionnaire concerning this proposal and it was suggested that this be circulated more widely. A request for information about QL groups abroad was made by the new Chairman, Sarah Gilpin, so that details could be put into the magazine on the sub-group pages.

John Mason and the committee were thanked for their hard work and the meeting drew to a close.

Committee Meeting 19th April 2009

Following the AGM the new committee met briefly. The other members welcomed the new Secretary, Alison Southern, and there was a discussion about ways to hold committee meetings without the time and



The new QUANTA Committee preparing for their first meeting.
Left to right: Dan Abbott, John Gilpin, Sarah Gilpin, Alison Southern, Dilwyn Jones.
(Keith Dunbar was unable to attend.)

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expense of face to face meetings. It was agreed to look at both skype and instant messaging. The web site was also talked about and the need for a content management system. Another committee meeting was scheduled for June.

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Sarah Gilpin

The most difficult task as a new Chairman is to not only follow the immediate predecessor but also to take QUANTA forward over the next three years.

Firstly I would like to thank John Mason for all his years of service to QUANTA in many capacities on the Committee, but most recently as Chairman. He will be a hard act to follow. As a small token of the Committee's appreciation he has been made an Honorary Member of QUANTA for services given to QUANTA over more than 15 years.

I am also pleased to announce that Honorary Membership has been given to Tony Firshman and Jochen Merz for the support they have given to the QL and QUANTA both as Traders and producers of hardware and software for many years. Long term QUANTA member Gil Lamb, currently living in Thailand, has been given Life membership in recognition of 24 years membership and his age.

The 'QL is 25' workshop and Annual general meeting held 18th/19th April 2009 at Allesley Hotel, Coventry was a success with a larger attendance than in recent years. We were delighted to welcome Steve and Annika Poole from France and Bob Spelten Jr. and Leo Moll from the Netherlands. Other visitors included three local past members and one not so local past Chairman, Phil Borman. Attendance on Saturday was 36 and on Sunday 27; there were 27 members and guests at the Celebration dinner on Saturday night. The highlights of the weekend were Dilwyn Jones's historical display and the excellent talks given by Steve Poole, Simon Goodwin and George Gwilt.

The Annual General Meeting was well attended. The business section of the meeting was quickly completed and the meeting thrown open to comments from the floor. A lively debate followed and is reported in the Secretary's précis.

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The question has been asked 'Where do we go from here?'

A suggestion has been put forward that QUANTA magazine should combine with QL Today to produce a single magazine. A Questionnaire is included in this magazine and will be available on the QUANTA web site. Please let us know your views. Those who were at the workshop have already made their views known.

Interest has been generated by the Acer and the Asus mini notepads. Both these machines were on display at Allesley, set up as QLs using emulators. Members who are planning to go abroad were considering using one as an easy portable method of taking their QL with them.

The Committee will consider the membership requirement for workshops throughout the country. Perhaps it is time to look at an occasional one day workshop in either the South or North of the country, and expect a low attendance. The Annual General Meeting could then become a regular feature in the Midlands over two days, thus providing the shortest distance for all members to travel. This year's venue was easily reached by road and by public transport. Members came from Scotland (1); Humberside (1); East Midlands (5); West Midlands (6); Wales (3); North West (10), South West (3) and South East (4); France (1) and the Netherlands (2).



Sarah Gilpin, QUANTA's new Chairman

I would like to thank all the members of last year's committee for their hard work. New Committee members this year are Alison Southern who has accepted the post of Secretary and Keith Dunbar, who has been co-opted to help Dan Abbott with the web site. John Gilpin will remain as Treasurer and Membership Secretary until next year, (so we are looking for a volunteer for this post) and as Magazine Editor. Dilwyn Jones is our News Editor, Helpdesk and Librarian, also general Historian.

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QL is 25 ALLESLEY WORKSHOP AND AGM

Sarah Gilpin

The success of any event is the pre-planning, whether it is for the Annual General meeting of QUANTA, to celebrate 25 years or the centenary district scout camp in 2007. We started preparations for QL is 25 immediately after the successful workshop in Solihull, October 2007. The Committee had agreed that we should hold such an important milestone in the history of the QL in the Midlands, to provide the shortest journeys for the most members.

The Holiday Inn where we met in 2007 declined to quote for April 2009; the other two hotels visited in Solihull were not as suitable; so it was decided to look elsewhere. Central Birmingham and central Coventry were ruled out. We did visit one hotel in the centre of Coventry but the parking was limited and very expensive. We visited another very large hotel on the outskirts and arrived in the middle of an Indian wedding, only to be told that the rooms we would be allocated were currently under water as the roof had collapsed. It was with relief when we arrived at the Allesley Hotel, to find ample free parking, suites that we could use and were away from the main concourse and a Conference Planner (Katy), who was really helpful. It looked like we had found a suitable venue – road access was good from all the motorways and public transport was available from Birmingham Airport and Coventry.



The Allesley Hotel, Near Coventry.

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The Committee met at The Allesley Hotel in October to discuss QL is 25 and to inspect the venue, meet Katy and get final quotations for the weekend. A budget was agreed at 4 years inflation above QL is 21 held at Portsmouth. A comparison between the prices at Portsmouth and Allesley was made and we all agreed to hold the QL is 25 celebration weekend with AGM at Allesley.

One of our eagle-eyed members noticed that the cost of a bedroom on the Internet was cheaper than the price we had negotiated for bed and breakfast. More negotiations with Katy reduced the B & B price by £18.00 per night. Bookings started to be made. An excellent dinner price was agreed which included after-dinner coffee, and the charge that we had estimated now allowed the Committee to offer every diner a free drink.

Dilwyn had arranged speakers, Steve Poole, George Gwilt and Simon Goodwin. Sarah had sent out invitations to the dinner to some of our former illustrious members and suppliers of hardware and software. There were two acceptances, Stuart Honeyball and his wife, and Phil Borman and his wife. Notices were put in QUANTA magazine, QL Today and on the QL-Users list; all that was needed was a good attendance from all these sources.

On our arrival on the Friday evening the room was ready for use; all the tables were covered with white table cloths, a step up from the bare tables usually found at a workshop. The seminar room was ready, chairs in place for meetings. The hotel staff volunteered to put out the QL is 25 road signs overnight.

On Saturday, as members started to arrive, the hotel willingly provided extra tables as requested throughout the morning. The A & E bench had to delay opening as the Southern family had a nightmare 4 hour journey due to the closure of the M6 Motorway. Lunch was arranged as a set of sandwich platters with salad and chips.

Members came and went, there were even some that came and stayed longer than anticipated and there were ex-member visitors who came for nostalgic reasons to see what had changed since they were members. The talks were well attended and the feedback was positive. 38 people signed in on Saturday, an excellent attendance amounting to over 20% of the total membership. Sunday there were 26 attendees, of whom about 20 attended the AGM in the afternoon. The main attractions were Dilwyn Jones' comprehensive "History of the QL" display, Rich Mellor's

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stand and the Nemqlug A & E bench manned by John Southern and Chris Grogan. Steve Poole gave talks on both Saturday and Sunday, George Gwilt and Simon Goodwin gave their talks on Saturday afternoon. Other attendees, John Hall, Bob Spelten and John Mason had their QLs on display not to mention the Gilpin's Pandora-housed Aurora and their monitor which was carried in the usual green 'tent' material carrying bag. Lively discussions were heard around the room throughout the weekend.



Activity at the QL is 25 QUANTA Workshop in The Allesley Hotel.

The Celebration Dinner was by choice from a 3 starter, 4 main course menu. Those attending had been issued tickets with a section to hand in for their free drink. The menu choices made were listed on their ticket, which enabled the staff to serve table by table correctly and quickly. Everyone enjoyed themselves and the conversation was lively (from the general noise level). At the end of the dinner an announcement was made that three new Honorary Members had been chosen "for their services to the QL fraternity", John Mason, long term Committee member and retiring Chairman; Tony Firshman and Jochen Merz, for their long time support as both Traders and suppliers of all things related to the QL. A glass tankard was presented to John Mason and arrangements have been made to send similar tankards to Jochen and Tony.

My conclusion is that the QL is 25 workshop and the AGM 2009 was a success. The weekend was well attended compared with other recent

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workshops. The comments received to date have been encouraging, both regarding the venue and the content of the weekend.

Let us all look forward to next year's workshop and Annual General Meeting weekend and make an effort to increase attendance. The venue is yet to be agreed but will probably be in the Midlands.



Old and young settle down to the QUANTA Silver Jubilee Celebratory Dinner at The Allesley Hotel

MEMBERSHIP REPORT Update April 2009

John Gilpin

As at 19th April 2009, (these updated figures were reported to the AGM on this date and cover all the renewal periods to this date) the QUANTA Membership was made up as follows: (2007 figures are given in brackets for comparison). Figures given as nnE denote the number of members taking the Electronic version of the Magazine. All other members take the printed copy which is posted to their home address.

	UK		OS	
Full Members	137	15E (155)	21	7E (24)
Associate Members	2	(2)	Nil	(Nil)
Honorary Members	6	(4)	2	(1)
Other Members	7	(5)	Nil	(Nil)
TOTALS	152	15E (166)	23	7E (25)
Combined Total		175	22E (191)	

John Gilpin
Honorary Membership Secretary.

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This new feature in QUANTA Magazine is included in order to give full voice to contributors who have ANYTHING to say about QUANTA or the QL. The views expressed are those of the contributor and are NOT intended to be the views of QUANTA or any of its committee members. [Ed]

IN PRAISE OF BLACK BOX USERS

Geoff Wicks

So far there has been a disappointing response to Duncan Neithercut's proposals for a radical reshaping of QUANTA into a largely web-based organisation (Vol. 25 Issue 6 page 5). Yet the issues he raises cannot be avoided. Like QUANTA many organisations are finding that interest in their formal activities such as shows and meetings is falling off and they are discovering a stronger web presence is necessary for survival.

I have long believed QUANTA's great failing is that it is too inward looking and that survival will mean reshaping itself into an outwardly orientated international organisation to serve the entire QL community. This would mean a much stronger web presence and a blurring of the distinction between members and non-members. At the same time there would need to be firm safeguards to protect those (long-standing) members who have no desire to be active on the Internet.

The bad news for Duncan Neithercut and myself is that a web based QUANTA is not going to happen, because most members do not want it.

One part of Duncan Neithercut's article I found hard to digest:

".....Paper is needed only for those who do not have Internet access. Given the number of QPC2 users this number must indeed be small and smaller still must be the number of QUANTA members who do not have some form of Internet access.

Now a question for the committee and membership to consider, is it right and fair therefore that QUANTA as an organisation should today be looking after a minority who have remained in the pre-Internet era, literally and absolutely at the expense of others' subscriptions?....."

Like most people who are active in QUANTA, Duncan Neithercut is making some flawed assumptions about the bulk of QUANTA membership.

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The public face of QUANTA as seen at meetings and in subgroups is not the true QUANTA. We do not even know what the true QUANTA is.

At the last official count QUANTA had 180 members, 158 UK and 22 overseas. For the moment let's concentrate on the UK members. About 50 of these are active members in the sense that they attend shows or subgroups, write for the magazine and, although not a QUANTA activity, participate in the QL-users group. Almost all these people are well known to the members of the QUANTA committee. The 100 plus who are not active are a largely unknown quantity. There is, however, good reason to believe that many make a simple use of the QL - the so-called black box users.

About 5 years ago John Southern initiated a survey of QUANTA members that was also open to non-members. 124 people responded to this survey of which 72 were QUANTA members. This represented over a quarter of the then membership which is about five times the response to surveys that professional market researchers expect.

QUANTA members could choose to participate in the survey either online or by paper. Non-QUANTA members could only participate online. 34 QUANTA members replied on paper and 38 online. A 53% online response hardly indicates enthusiasm for an Internet based QUANTA.

A more interesting statistic was that under 57% of respondents were QPC users and I think it is a reasonable assumption that the proportion under QUANTA members was much lower.

John Southern concluded that "many QLers only have basic equipment".

Of course this survey was conducted a long time ago and may not give an up to date picture. Recently another statistic has been published that was not available to Duncan Neithercut when he wrote his article. Out of 158 UK QUANTA members only 15 - less than one in ten - have opted for the electronic magazine.

There is no evidence that the majority of QUANTA members are enthusiastic about the organisation becoming online based.

The so-called black box users are not inferior QL users and are contributing far more to QUANTA and the QL community than the active

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members suppose. We should see them as loyal QL-ers and loyal QUANTA members whose QL use is different from our own.

Over the years I have had more contact than most with black box users. Several were very elderly and were anxious to transfer important family and business records in QL format to the PC format that their children used. Many had occupied important positions in their working life. One had been a top executive of a household name company; another I had met over 40 years ago when I was a sixth-former and he was a national activist for a political party; and a third was a man whose name I had occasionally seen on Home Office circulars during my probation officer days.

Even those who had not risen so highly in their work situation were using their QLs for the most fascinating of tasks. I saw some interesting spreadsheets and data bases.

A simple QL use does not mean a trivial QL use. Why should black box users go over to a PC when the QL does the task just as well?

Recently, when I celebrated my 67th birthday, I realised that my father died at the age of 68 and my grandfathers at 66 and 69. I expect to go on for a good few years yet, but such a realisation concentrates the mind and you start to assess your priorities in life more ruthlessly. Maybe learning to use a new computer and operating system just to keep QUANTA activists happy is not a top priority. Nor should it be.

We should not fall into the error of thinking the so-called black box users are contributing nothing to QUANTA. Recently QUANTA held its quarter centenary celebration. It will be some months before we have the final bill for this, but when QUANTA ran a similar show in 2005 it cost just over £3,000 and was attended by about 45 people. In other words the show cost almost 5 UK subscriptions per attendee. That money had to come from somewhere. Could it be possible that in attending the QL is 25 show Mr Neithercut and myself were doing so "literally and absolutely at the expense of others' subscriptions"?

Nor is it just QUANTA that benefits from the so-called black box users. Last year we mourned the loss of two QL traders, but our behaviour said something different from our words. We were not using traders so our behaviour was saying we did not need them.

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As it happens I have spent a lot of money on hardware and software in the last five years, but in common with most other QPC users that money has gone to the likes of PC World. QL traders disappeared because QPC users were buying neither hardware nor software from them. The only profitable line for QL traders was in second hand hardware. Who was buying this? Mainly black box users.

Throughout this article I have used the term "so-called black box users" because, in practice, many of them are not using black boxes at all. They are using cased systems that were built for them by a trader to whom they had remained loyal over many years. It was the black box users and not the QPC users who kept the traders going for as long as they did. Rich Mellor tells me that one of his most popular lines is QL keyboard membranes, financed by a loan from QUANTA, and that one of the most frequent things he is asked about is QL compatible printers.

So fellow QPC-ers before criticising black box users, first take a sharp look at yourself.

THE WEB SITE AND QUESTIONS

John Roberts

I've been looking at the QUANTA and linked web sites. Very impressive these days but one or two lacks in my opinion, as one trying to get a QL working properly again, after a long spell of problems.

First - no obvious places for one to ask for help. If you know how helpful Dilwyn always is or that Jochen offers the best advice on QPC go there, but there's a great deal on the web site before you realise that. A HELP sign at the beginning could be a first stop.

Further on, the site sometimes becomes bewildering. The site of 'QL on a stick' is comprehensive, but at the end I decided that most enquirers might stick to the well-tryed, if not particularly efficient systems that they already have. A newcomer might just stay bewildered. Are there really any newcomers these days?

Returning to my QL and using QPAC I found everything painfully slow; and worse, that I had forgotten many of the commands in the EDITOR that I used to use without having to think about them. Transferring to QPC on my laptop I could use the same programs more quickly but had forgotten (among many other things) how to load up the EDITOR's help screens.

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Despite 25 years as a QL user and 83 years of age I have not yet succumbed to Alzheimer's and I should like to continue to use the QL for a year or two yet. The QL web sites are brilliant but they seem to require the sort of basic advice that I need two decades a year ago and either ignored or have forgotten. But the couple of hundred floppy disks that are full of old programs are hard to handle in quantity after years of flicking from one PC desktop program to another.

Keep up the good work but try to service the laggards as well as the knowledgeable.

[Perhaps Dilwyn will look at the problems John raises above and include some advice in his Helpline Articles. The points raised about the QUANTA Web Site have been passed on to Dan and Keith. - Ed]

QL TODAY AND QUANTA – ONE ENTITY?

John Mason

QUANTA Silver Jubilee Magazine included an article by Ian Burkinshaw – “The Future for QL Today”

As Ian intended this article has now also been published in QL Today, Volume 13, Issue 3, March - May 2009.

In his article Ian Burkinshaw suggested that –

1. QL Today and QUANTA (Magazine) should become one entity
2. That QUANTA should update and put Jan Jones etc into PDF format.

Both suggestions deserve to be taken seriously but raise the question as to whether Ian explored in any depth the implications of his suggestions before going public?

On the proposal of becoming “ONE ENTITY” –

Jochen, commenting in QL Today, alternates, in a single breath, between rejecting Ian's suggestion and offering his scenario for achieving same.

Not surprisingly that scenario is very favourable to QL Today.

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Indeed he appears to envisage subsuming QUANTA Magazine completely, being paid handsomely by QUANTA for so doing, requiring all QUANTA Members to subscribe to QL Today in order to receive QUANTA information, and in so doing would increase his income by between £4,000 and £5,000 per year. Not a Bad Try Jochen!

Moreover accepting Jochen's scenario - as is - could well be expected to result in the demise of QUANTA in less than two years.

So how might QUANTA respond –

QUANTA, so far as its Magazine is concerned, might consider becoming a single entity with QL Today if –

1. The new publication had a new name – say, for purposes of discussion, “NEW QUANTA / QL TODAY MAGAZINE”.
2. The new magazine had 2 Joint Editors under shared QUANTA / J M control.
3. The new magazine to be published 6 times a year, and thus ensure that Notices as required by QUANTA's Constitution can be given at the proper times.
4. QUANTA distributed this magazine to all UK resident subscribers, and J-M-S to subscribers resident in Europe and the Rest of The World.
5. The BASIC subscription rate might be £24.00p. inclusive of QUANTA Membership and the Magazine, and UK postal charges.
6. Subscribers resident in Europe and the Rest of The World would in addition pay appropriate postal surcharges.
7. Present subscribers to QL Today would need to pay these new subscription rates to receive the new publication.
8. QUANTA to receive £14.00 of the BASIC subscription. NB: This would need to be adjusted dependent upon where printed.
9. The Format size and Overall weight to be subject to review, in particular to avoid incurring LARGE item Postal Rates, and ensure it would be transmittable by email.
10. Up to the equivalent of, say, 12 A4 pages to be reserved for QUANTA Information.
11. QUANTA Information to be on different colour paper to the rest of the new magazine.
12. To contain reproduction and transmission costs the relative costs of printing all copies in one place or printing copies for the

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UK separately to be explored before any contract is awarded to print the whole run.

As regards updating and converting to PDF format various books and manuals:- This is something which QUANTA has explored many times.

UK Copyright law rather than finance or will to do is the key.

On one occasion QUANTA got permission from Jan Jones to make a limited run reprint of her handbook. But even that reprint took a very long while to sell completely.

Other copyright holders have been reluctant to even consider QUANTA's requests.

QUANTA Members – What are your views on these matters?

Please send them to The Editor etc .

Editor@quanta.org.uk

A VIEW FROM THE FRINGE.

John Roberts

The arrival of the brilliant QUANTA Silver Jubilee issue has prompted this reaction.

As a very non-technical member, I first glimpsed the potential of personal computing in the early 1980's and bought the machine, now almost forgotten that had only 1kB of memory. Then came the impatient wait for the delivery of my Sinclair QL in 1984. I very soon joined the original QUANTA and soon became a subscriber to various periodicals serving the new market.

The height of my technical reach was over 60 years ago, in my early twenties, learning to assemble and build a touring/racing bicycle; and no way could I ever surpass that achievement. As a new QL member, I was telephoned by a local stranger, Dave Lawrence, who became a very good friend and whose vastly greater technical know-how was of enormous help to me in the early days.

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Not much sank in: reading QUANTA still often makes me feel like hanging on to the edge of a cliff by my fingers, with imminent descent into complete lack of understanding.

So I write from the Fringe.

In early days I was very taken with the brilliant PSION CHESS, which remains one of my favourite programs, although increased memory have made it almost impossible to beat! QUILL and ARCHIVE of the PSION quartet, were helpful. However, being more interested in literary than other work on computer (I have written six or seven books, three of them published) I found the arrival of EDITOR a real boon and may be the only QL-er who regularly had eight or nine versions on booting up. Since I still write - and have a web site mastered by my son - <www.jrmondialist.org>

The days when the Sussex functioned sometimes offered more hints to understanding and Roy Wood and Keith Mitchell were able to explain various things. Generally, however, my part was that of the complete tyro, capable only of following well-worn paths and gaining a small reputation as capable of making almost any program go wrong somewhere. My progress towards more facility was of course immensely helped by new hardware - Trump Card, Gold Card and finally ROMDisq. Then I fell for a PC, not willingly but because it offered two vital additions - ability to copy text and turn it into computer files; and email connection.

It is essential but infuriating: the QL starts at switch-on, unlike my laptop which can take seven minutes (!) before available to start work.

Since then, I have found Dilwyn Jones a most knowledgeable and helpful source of advice and it does not surprise me to see so much information from him in the Jubilee issue. As far as the future of QUANTA and QLTODAY are concerned, I am not much help. Several times over the past few years I have wavered in my intention to subscribe. I have never bought QLTODAY: it's often been too technical for me to read, let alone understand, so it won't help me to combine it with QUANTA.

It would be useful to have a handy guide to basics, often now forgotten owing to concentration away from the QL. What exactly does SMSQ/E do that QDOS did not? Or MINERVA?

There are a good many other questions ... but this is enough.

Q. Is there any way of changing the case of a name in SuperBASIC? I inadvertently entered a variable name in capitals and I want it to be in lower case.

A. SuperBASIC (and SBASIC) use the case of the first instance of a name to determine the case of other (later) references to that name. The only way to change the case is to write a line which specifies the case, then merge in your original program, e.g. if your program defined the variable "NUMBER" but you wanted "number" to be in lower case, what you could do is NEW, then write a short one line program:

```
1 LET number=0
```

then merge the original program and you will find that all references to "NUMBER" have now become "number". This not only works with variable names, you can use it to update procedure and function names too.

Q. My PC's mouse has a scroll wheel. Will it work with QPC?

A. Yes. Using the scroll wheel will scroll some menus in QL pointer driven programs, or scroll the editing screen in Toolkit 2's ED editor (very useful for scrolling through long basic listings!) along the lines of the "ALT-cursor up/down" keypresses. Clicking on the mouse wheel will pick the button frame, similar to an "ALT ." keypress, or like the third button on some mouse systems. This is only implemented in version 3 and later of QPC2, so it may not work on older versions. Also, it may not work on Windows 95 systems, as that version of Windoze implements the mouse wheel handler differently.

Q. Can I use a mouse on QemuLator? I tried, but couldn't get it to work.

A. Assuming we're talking about the Windows version of QemuLator, there is a small file called "macmouse" which needs to be loaded as well as pointer environment.

Q. I like to be able to put pointer driven programs into the QPac2 button frame, but not all programs have a Sleep icon. Is there any way of putting

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those programs in the button frame? My screen gets cluttered with so many programs open at the same time.

A. QPac2 has a useful little thing called Button_Sleep whose job is to do just this. The easiest way to call it is from QPac2's Exec menu, or you can set up a hotkey definition to just 'Zap' any program into the button frame. In this example, I use CTL-ALT-F1 (hold down the CTRL and ALT keys and tap the F1 key):

```
ERT HOT_WAKE (CHR$(233),'button_sleep')
```

CHR\$(233) is the key CODE for CTRL-ALT-F1.

Q. Is there a preferred order of which part of a boot program does what?

A. Although QL BASIC makes it quite easy to write a boot program, I suggest the following order for the reasons explained below:

Lightning or Speedscreen if used

TK2_EXT or load Toolkit 2 if disk version

Set DATA_USE and PROG_USE if used when loading extensions

Install BASIC extensions (using LRESPR or RESPRL/LBYTES/CALL)

Hotkey or altkey definitions

HOT_GO command to activate hotkey job

Reset DATA_USE, PROG_USE etc as required

Execute any programs needed at startup

Chain load or merge a second basic program (e.g. a program which uses the extensions loaded by the boot program.

Q. My PC keyboard has extra function keys (F6 to F12) and various other extra keys like Home, Page Up, Page Down and End. Can I use these from Basic on my emulator?

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A. Some of these extra keys are mapped onto equivalent QL keyboard keypresses, but it may vary a little from system to system. You can test if a PC keyboard key generates a valid QL key code with this little routine:

```
REPEAT loop:PRINT CODE(INKEY$(-1))
```

Here are some example results I get on my laptop, when using QPC2. The equivalent QL keyboard key presses are shown in brackets.

Home	=	213	(SHIFT ALT UP)
Page Up	=	212	(SHIFT UP)
Page Down	=	220	(SHIFT DOWN)
End	=	221	(SHIFT ALT DOWN)
F6	=	234	(SHIFT F1)
F7	=	238	(SHIFT F2)
F8	=	242	(SHIFT F3)
F9	=	246	(SHIFT F4)
F10	=	250	(SHIFT F5)
DEL	=	202	(SHIFT RIGHT)

Q. Some time ago I created a program with an older version of Easypr. The menus are still OK, but they are linked to an old version of the extensions called ptrmen_cde. I am now using a newer version of Easypr. Do I have to redesign the menus, or is it possible to substitute the new extensions file somehow.

A. This can be done using the Appendix Manager program supplied with Easypr. First of all, load the new base extensions file ptrmen_cde. This should not have any menu definitions appended to it at this stage. Next, load the original extensions file which has the menus appended to it. Appendix manager now takes the menu definitions from the original extensions file and appends them to the newer version you loaded first (in essence it strips the old extensions file out and adds or appends what's left to the new base extension file. Now just save the new version.

Q. When I try to access files on my PC with DIR DOS1_ from QPC2, some of the files are not shown in the list. Why is this?

A. I can think of two possible reasons. The first is that the file is simply flagged as "hidden" in Windows. More likely, it is possible that the filenames are too long for SMSQ/E which has the same limit on filename lengths as

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QDOS, 36 characters. This includes the directory name. So if the PC files are in a long directory path like

C:\Very long directory name\

This leaves only about 12 characters for a visible filename. There are two possible workarounds:

1. Move or copy the files to a shorter directory name, e.g. C:\JR\ and make sure the filenames are not too long for SMSQ/E.
2. Define a DOS drive to include all or part of the path name. This partially adds to the listable files, e.g. try seeing what's in C:\program files\Internet explorer\ by using DIR "DOS1_Program Files_Internet Explorer_" and you won't have much success. Then, try DOS_DRIVE 8,"C:\Program Files\Internet Explorer\":DIR DOS8_ and you should see more files.

Q. I have bought a TFT flat screen monitor and can't get it to work with my Aurora system (part of the picture is missing). It works fine with my PC.

A. TFT screens tend to like one particular screen resolution and aspect ratio. For example, if it is a 1024x768 pixel 15 inch screen it will usually prefer resolution ratios of 4:3. In this case, you can try 512x384, or 640x480 or 768x576 on the Aurora. Some resolutions offered by the Aurora may be "scaled" by the flat screen monitor and look awful especially with text as it tries to make the video fit by repeating some pixels and not others. Experiment a little with DISP_SIZE commands on the Aurora until you find the best setting for your particular monitor.

Q. If I buy SMSQ/E for my computer, will it run my old SuperBASIC programs? I have heard the SBASIC won't run all programs.

A. Yes, it will run almost all your old SuperBASIC programs. You may find that the odd one does not work, but they are usually ones which use POKE commands to access the computer's data structures, such as POKEing directly into system variables, basic areas and the screen. The opposite is not always true – SBASIC has more commands and functions than SuperBASIC. If a program written on an SMSQ/E system uses these new keywords, it may not run on a SuperBASIC machine. The SAVE and LOAD commands work in the same way on both types of system – Basic programs are saved as untokenised plain text files.

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Q. I have some programs saved using Liberation Software's QSAVE utility. Does this work on an SBASIC system – can I run these programs?

A. You don't need the QLOAD/QSAVE software on an SBASIC system as compatible commands are built into SBASIC. There are also QMERGE and QMRUN commands. QLOAD and QLRUN will happily run programs saved using Liberation Software's QSAVE command.

Q. I have an old game which runs far too fast to be playable on my system.

A. If you are using SMSQ/E, try using the SLUG command to slow down the system. SLUG 1 will make it run at normal speed, while SLUG 5 should make it very slow. If you are using a fast QDOS based system which doesn't have a SLUG command, try Norman Dunbar's free Slowgold program to slow down the system. You can download Slowgold from: www.dilwyn.uk6.net/utills/index.html

Q. I have a program which only runs from floppy disk. How can I make it work from hard disk?

A. If your system has the DEV device driver (most hard disk systems do) you can put the program into a directory on your hard disk and set the DEV device to point to this directory, then alter the DEV device name to masquerade as the floppy disk drive. For example, copy Quill into a directory called win1_pSION_ and then use the following DEV commands:

```
DEV_USE 1,win1_pSION_  
DEV_USE 2,win1_pSION_  
DEV_USE 'flp'  
FLP_USE 'fdk'
```

The first 2 commands set DEV1_ and DEV2_ to be equal to win1_pSION_ so that references to both flp1_ and flp2_ by the software can be handled. The third line DEV_USE "flp" changes the names of dev1_ and dev2_ to flp1_ and flp2_, so that when a program does DIR FLP1_ for example, it is really doing DIR win1_pSION_. Finally, FLP_USE "fdk" renames the floppy disk names to something else (in this case fdk1_ and fdk2_) so that they can still be used even though the name is now being used to access a hard disk directory.

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Q. My QL has a Trump Card expansion. I have been offered a Gold Card. What is the difference and also what is the difference between Gold and Super Gold cards?

A. All were made by the same company, Miracle Systems Ltd. Your Trump Card gave your QL a total of 896K of RAM. A Gold Card gives your QL 2MB of RAM and a faster 68000 processor, disk interface and battery backed clock. A Gold Card lets your programs run much faster than the QL and Trump Card. A Super Gold Card gives your QL 4MB RAM and an even faster 68020 processor, so programs ran even faster, a parallel printer interface, plus a disk interface allowing connection of 2 pairs of floppy drives (4 drives total). Trump Card and Gold Card could handle up to 4 disk drives, but needed an external adaptor card at extra cost to run drives 3 and 4.

Q. My program needs to POKE values into system variables. I understand that the system variables may not be in the location in memory on SMSQ/E systems. Is there any way I can ensure that the POKES work wherever the system variables lie in memory?

A. The SMSQ/E manual states that “the use of PEEK and POKE is best regarded as a form of terrorism.” Even so, it is relatively simple to locate the base of the system variables in memory using a special form of the Basic function VER\$. PRINT VER\$(-2) will tell you the base address of the system variables and you can simply add the offset of the value you want to change (e.g. LET addr=VER\$(-2):POKE addr+n,value), although it is not recommended practice to go fiddling around in this area.

There is also a special form of the POKE, POKE_W and POKE_L (and PEEK, PEEK_W and PEEK_L) commands which is designed to poke directly into system variable offsets, which reduces the risk of the system variables happening to change between the LET and POKE statements shown above:

POKE !offset,value

This version automatically adds the address of the base of the system variables to the offset value given, and places the value given into the resultant address.

VER\$(-2) and POKE !offset should work on both SBASIC and Minerva systems. If you need to make a program take advantage of facilities on Minerva or SMSQ/E systems, you can use the standard VER\$ to make a decision as to whether to use the extended facilities:

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system_variables_base = 163840 : REMark fixed location on old Sinclair ROMs

version\$ = VER\$

IF version\$ = 'JSL1' or version\$ = 'HBA' THEN system_variables_base = VER\$(-2)

REMark Minerva=JSL1, SBASIC = 'HBA'

I had intended to hold a Helpline Question and Answer forum on the Sunday morning of QL is 25, and include questions raised in future Helpline columns.

However, with the benefit of hindsight, Sunday morning was the wrong time and between the small number of people there first thing and the fact that most questions to be asked had already been asked on the Saturday, it got cancelled and Steve Poole gave the (in my opinion) far more interesting talk on 3D Graphics instead.

I did make a note of questions I got asked over the weekend and I hope to include many of these in future Helpline columns once I have had a chance to write up comprehensive replies (the deadline for this issue is too close after QL Is 25).

It was actually quite amazing how many of the questions revolved around the same issues – emulators and sub-notebooks. Questions such as:

- How do I get Toolkit 2 on an emulator?
- How do I transfer QL software to an emulator?
- How do the tools programs in QLAY and QL2K work?
- Which sub-notebook is best for me?
- Should I use a Linux or Windows emulator?

It did become quite clear to me that emulators are slowly but surely taking over as John Mason suggested in his Chairman's Notes recently. I've been quite accustomed to seeing PCs with QPC at workshops in recent years, and fewer and fewer traditional QL systems, including Auroras (Aurorae?) and Qx0 machines.

Ian Burkinshaw's article "The Future For QL Today" which was printed in "QUANTA SILVER JUBILEE MAGAZINE" has now also been published in QL Today, volume 13, Issue 3.

Jochen Merz comments on Ian's article on Page 52 of that same issue of QL Today.

In his article Ian says "I think the time has come for QUANTA and QL Today to become one entity, comments "major contributors to both magazines are the same", and highlights "QUANTA has a problem with recruiting committee officers and more particularly the magazine editor".

He also says "However the updating of The SBASIC/SuperBASIC Reference Manual and converting Jan Jones "QL SuperBASIC" handbook into PDF format should be undertaken."

APPRECIATION

Dealing firstly with Ian's second point.

QUANTA has visited many times the question of reproducing, which includes making PDFs, of "out of print books and manuals". The key problem has been, and continues to be, UK Copyright Law. Copyright holders have an absolute right to grant, or otherwise, licences to reprint their works, and to demand a royalty payment for same.

This is by no means as simple as Ian may imagine, and QUANTA would not be acting responsibly if it spent an appreciable sum of money to secure a licence and then sold only a few copies.

On the question of "The Future For QL TODAY" this surely is principally about the future of QL Today not QUANTA Magazine.

QUANTA Magazine has improved dramatically over the past 5 years. Granted it is now published once every 2 months and no longer monthly; but it is a flourishing first class production - thanks primarily to John Gilpin's hard work..

One does not abandon success!

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QL Today however has had to reduce publishing from 6 to 4 issues per annum.

It is to be expected that certain people will be major contributors to both publications.

All associations and clubs have difficulty with recruiting particular skills from time to time, moreover amalgamating QUANTA and QL Today would not result in QUANTA ceasing to need an Editor, if anything the need would be greater..

Turning to Jochen Merz's comments -

In the first place he alternates, in one breath, between rejecting Ian's proposition and putting forward an option which would be very financially beneficial to QL Today.

He suggests that in return for QUANTA giving QL Today half its subscription income he would be prepared to produce an extended QL Today including 4 or 6 or 8 A4 pages of QUANTA Information for which QUANTA would be responsible. Apparently he has produced a version of QL Today with a German language supplement which was available on payment of an additional subscription.

QUANTA would continue to need to provide an Editor, and QUANTA members would need to subscribe to QL Today to view information on QUANTA matters, but QL Today would arrange distribution.

In essence QL Today would benefit by an increased income of between £4,000 and £5,000 per annum: but is there any real benefit to QUANTA in such a proposition, OR would QUANTA disappear completely in less than 2 years?

[For the benefit of those QUANTA Members who do not subscribe to QL Today, I have included QL Today's Editorial Comment below - Ed]

QL Today Editorial Comment

Jochen Merz

Editor's comment: *There is a lot of truth in your letter. We don't want to comment on the QUANTA/TF stuff, we're glad it is sorted out. QL Today and*

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QUANTA cannot become one entity... simply because I, Jochen, prefer to stay independent.

However, I would be happy to find ways of reducing the costs and gaining more readers.

If you feel that the QUANTA magazine could/should be merged into QL Today (to become one entity), then I am open to suggestions. Possible ways have been done in the past with the German QL club.

They paid a bit more, and there were 4, 6 or 8 pages added to the magazine just for the club members. This way, a lot of postage was saved and there was no urge to fill a magazine simply because it had to be there. That was practical at a time when we had hundreds and hundreds of club members and non-club members.

However, in the present situation, I would rather suggest something like: QUANTA pays half of the QL subscription for its members (subsidises if... I think it would be a good investment for the readers) and gets 4, 6 or 8 pages for QUANTA-matters inside the magazine for which QUANTA would be responsible, a "QUANTA section". If that's interesting stuff, it may lead even to QL Today only readers to become QUANTA members, to benefit from both.

This, for example, would remove a lot of pressure from QUANTA in trying to fill a magazine. I honour John Gilpin's work (especially the last QUANTA issue was very well done), but John told me some time ago that he had too many things to do.

All this is just a thought, which immediately came to mind when I read the letter from Ian. If you look at the renewal form at the end of the magazine, then you will see that there is, and was, no plan for anything like the suggestions I made here.

I am open to suggestions, but in the end the QUANTA members decide. And if we want anything to change quickly, the decisions have to be made quickly.

Maybe, hopefully not, Ian may be right sooner or later and we lose everything, because the numbers are too small and nothing is worthwhile anymore.

We don't want this to happen. We are prepared for Volume 14.

But, good things and good ideas can always be improved, and we are happy to help."

QUANTA OPINION POLL - APRIL 2009

ABOUT YOU

Sname Fname

Post Code House Number/Name

Telephone No Mobile No

Internet Access YES / NO Broadband YES / NO

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ABOUT MERGING QL TODAY AND QUANTA MAGAZINE

1. Ian Burkinshaw suggests "QL Today and QUANTA Magazine should become a "Single Entity"

STRONGLY AGREE	DON'T KNOW	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. As a member of QUANTA would you be willing to subscribe to QL Today in addition to QUANTA to be able to read about QUANTA matters?

NB: COMPLETE ONE SECTION ONLY

(A) UK Resident	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	PAY BOTH
Total Subscription £43.50 per year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(B) EUROPE Resident	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	PAY BOTH
Total Subscription £49.54 per year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(C) REST OF THE WORLD Resident	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW	PAY BOTH
Total Subscription £ 62.72 per year	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. If a single merged Magazine were to be proposed, how many times a year should it be published?

FOUR	SIX
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. If a single merged Magazine were to be proposed bearing in mind postage, what size Format should it be?

A4	A5
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

PLEASE DETACH AND RETURN COMPLETED FORM TO:- **JOHN MASON,**
73, CHEWTON COMMON ROAD, CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET. BH23 5LZ UNITED KINGDOM.



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Tel. +44 (0) 161 865 2872

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Visit the QUANTA Web Site

<http://www.quanta.org.uk>

Mischief-Maker reports on some of the things that some of those present may prefer you did not know! In other words, he tries to lose as many friends in as few pages as he can.

Members of this organisation who also peruse the pages of another QL publication with somewhat larger pages than that of our own may have noticed in their June 2008 issue that the said publication's somewhat rotund former editor, who is now Head Hack with our own magazine, appeared according to a photograph published therein to have taken his elevation to QUANTA committee slightly too seriously and was light-heartedly accused of "megalomania" by his successor, and "...expects ordinary members of QUANTA to genuflect before addressing him." Supporting evidence by way of a photograph was included in that issue.

Well, Mischief-Maker can now report that this has been taken to new heights (or lows?), as this picture shows.



Here, we see the editor of the said publication with the larger pages, on his knees before his Welsh predecessor. We are grateful to another visitor from west of Chester for this picture.

Mischief-Maker also wishes to congratulate the aforementioned Welshman on setting up such a magnificent History Exhibition on Friday night. However, on Saturday morning he was reluctantly dragged from his hotel room down to the workshop by a somewhat excited Secretary to redo the exhibition, which had been somewhat rearranged by hotel staff overnight.

How much does a Do Not Disturb sign cost these days? And who asked the night staff to put chairs behind ALL the tables (which they took to mean the exhibition). Grrr.

BUSted

Your committee expressed its gratitude to the editorial staff of the said magazine with larger pages for additional information about public transport to QL Is 25. It would appear, however, that not all of the committee took this advice to heart. It appears that one of them in particular required, ahem,

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additional help to catch a bus to the event and at one time looked as though he may well end up in a different part of the Midlands.

A phone call to the venue to elicit help caused one individual to hurry out to the nearest bus stop to find the number of the buses headed in QL Is 25's direction. Now we are not naming the fleet-footed individual who undertook this task while the said committee member was persuaded to stay on the line, but let me just say that the sheer haste with which this task was undertaken by this individual brought to mind the names of past QL software such as Lightning, Turbo and Speedscreen...

Thanks to this selfless task, the committee member concerned did eventually grace the event's doors later rather than sooner. We are pleased to report that his HTML and web site design skills are allegedly somewhat better than his skills with public transport.



"Which bus did you say it was again and where's the bus stop?"



The Man from Miracle (Stuart Honeyball) & John Hall

Small Miracles

A certain ginger-haired formerly bearded and formerly single QL hardware manufacturer undertook a nostalgic trip to QL Is 25 on Saturday to catch up with old friends. He now drives rather than cycles to these events, and his beard is conspicuous by its absence these days, but an outing on bikes with his wife of the last couple of years on Sunday also proved that QLers are not always blessed with good navigational skills. Having got lost during their little trip, the two again turned up at QL Is 25 for the second day...just as the last persons were loading their cars and leaving!

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Unexpected Trip To Birmingham

Despite causing his successor at QL Today to genuflect before him, it appears that QUANTA's Head Hack has no better sense of direction than either the Man From Miracle, or most other committee members for that matter. Having successfully pointed his car in the direction of Wales upon departure from Allesley, hoping to go via the M6 motorway he found his little blue car getting ever closer to the centre of Birmingham, having great difficulty in finding the path to Wales.



Has Anyone Seen This Car Lately???

Border Control report a sighting of a little blue car matching the description last seen heading westward towards the said principality in generally the right direction some hours later, albeit with steam emanating from the ears of the occupants, although it is not known at what time the little blue car eventually reached its intended destination. Dare Mischief-Maker suggest they invest in a copy of Q-Route?

Where's My Room?

It becomes increasingly evident to Mischief-Maker that QUANTA members are not born with the greatest sense of direction ever. This is borne out by the fact that a certain Turbo-loving Scottish QL software-writer had great difficulty finding his room after the Friday night dinner. Indeed he seemed to have great difficulty finding his way out of the restaurant and bar. Aware that his room was in a different part of the hotel to most members, he initially tried every exit from the restaurant and bar, each time returning in ever greater frustration to ever increasing howls of mirth from those present.

It is not known whether he did eventually find his room, although Mischief-Maker later found out that the Turbo-loving fellow did turn up on Saturday morning complaining that the day was half over at 10.00 am.!! We notice that meetings of the Scottish QL Users Group are held at his house, so we do rather hope he gives the Scottish members rather better directions to his house than to his own hotel room!

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And As For The Treasurer...

Your Treasurer does not escape mention in this article any more than any other committee member. Mischief-Maker refers back to a committee meeting also held at the Allesley Hotel a few months back when inspecting the hotel. It should be noted that your Treasurer turned up a little late for that meeting, having missed the intended turning and finished up on the M6 near Rugby before realising what he had done wrong.

We all waited with baited breath to see if he would turn up at anywhere near the correct time this time, but we need not have worried as he had entrusted navigation to the SatNav and arrived at the hotel from the opposite direction (albeit possibly with the SatNav sending him through three streams and a couple of rivers en-route). What is it with the current committee and navigation?

Mischief-Maker notes that visitors who came all the way from France and The Netherlands seemed to have had no problems finding us!

Oh, and while I mention our dear Treasurer, it seems he takes counting the pennies a little bit too far for his own good. He invested the princely sum of about 3 pounds on a neat little black keyboard for his computer from a well known supermarket chain. However, recent emails from him have been conspicuous by the absence of any letter F's. Did he seriously think that for the majestic amount invested he could expect all 26 letters of the English alphabet? This could be more serious than we thought – how is he expected to cope with QUANTA's “_inances” now? How will he handle the “_unds”? And maybe there will be a bit less “e__ing and blinding” at home now? Fortunately, he can still email his co-conspirators as none of the committee have an F in their names!

And speaking of the pennies, one of those would appear to have dropped with our new Secretary's family, who have taken to saving money by making their own ED disks. If rumours are to be believed, Mr Southern drills offset holes in their HD disks to fool their ED drives into thinking they are genuine ED disks. Mischief-Maker hopes that the future of QUANTA does not depend on data saved on these little Miracles (ED... Miracle Systems... geddit?)

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Minefield



Mischief-Maker stumbled into a right old minefield when he visited RWAP Software's stand. He offers this photograph as testimony to this fact.

Eagle Eye Award

This goes to another resident of Wales, albeit from further south, one John Hall, who not being satisfied with winning Simon Goodwin's "Name The Hardware" competition at QL Is 21, and who despite having hit the town (well, Allesley Village) with Mr Honeyball the night before, was alert enough on Sunday to notice that an article by QUANTA's News Editor in the recent Tin Foil (sorry, Silver Paper) edition of QUANTA magazine wrongly credited Linus Torvalds as a "member of the team behind the QL."

Fair enough, a genuine mistake well spotted. However, he also noticed that the same article copied in the QL history exhibition did not bear the aforementioned error, having somehow been magically corrected by the photocopier. Mischief-Maker now hopes that the said Mr Hall will be employed by your Editor to proof-read future articles received from west of Chester.

Less-Than-Eagle-Eyed Award

This award goes to one Mike Bedford-White, long serving secretary of the West Midlands sub-group. Some time ago he informed the publication with larger pages that he had stumbled across a photo of our beloved Head Hack and mistook him for the late proprietor of Adman Services, the late Dennis Briggs.

Undeterred, Mike strolled up to the said rotund Welshman at QL Is 25 and greeted him with "Hello Dennis" (which was generally accepted to be rather unkind to the late Mr Briggs). QUANTA is offering to pay for an optician's services...so that the members of his sub-group can be correctly identified.

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And another Welsh visitor (again mentioning no names but is not male) in turn mistook him for John Pertwee and Mischief-Maker will refrain from identifying which of John Pertwee's TV characters she mistook him for...



Mike Bedford-White



New QUANTA Secretary (Alison Southern on the right) with her family - all QIers.

New Committee Member (and new words)

Mischief-Maker welcomes the new committee member Alison Southern to the post of Secretary. Her surname should go some way towards helping reduce the impression of Northern bias on the committee...

But Mischief-Maker is somewhat worried that her minutes of meetings may contain some rather choice and unprintable language, after she had apparently learned some new words from the team of the QL A&E stand she had been sitting next to throughout QL Is 25. Unsuccessful attempts at resuscitating various dead QL hardware were occasionally interspersed with words of, shall we say, between 3 and 5 letters (as admitted later by Chris Grogan at the AGM).



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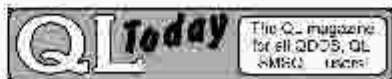


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Subscriptions taken online

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We do hope that the other half of the A&E team (her husband) was suitably chastised when they got home!

Chairman's Fan Club

We hope that our newly elected Chairman (well, woman) was suitably impressed with being awoken in the early hours of Sunday morning in her hotel room by hordes of what must have been avid QUANTA members eagerly seeking the autograph of their new leader shortly after the day of her election as the organisation's first female chairman had started!

It is not known whether they were successful in obtaining the said autograph or whether other less desirable words were offered to them instead at that unholy time!

And Speaking Of Chairmen...

Her long-serving predecessor nearly became a different kind of Chairman on Sunday afternoon following the AGM, when he was asked to take a picture of the newly elected committee for 2009/10. Having graciously accepted the invitation to take the photo, and finding he had to step further and further back in the rather small Maynard Room to get them all in the shot, he nearly took a tumble over the row of chairs at the back. Mischief-Maker worries if he had been practising using the engraved tankard he was awarded with the night before...

Beard? What Beard?

And another former Chairman, Phil Borman, was persuaded to leave his dentist's surgery for the weekend, to model the latest in QUANTA fashion accessories, a certain well known silver rag (and we are not referring to his beard!)



Ah, hold on, is this where the Man From Miracle's beard ended up?

Phil Borman, modelling QUANTA's Silver Jubilee Issue

DJ's Web Site Moves

Dilwyn Jones's QL web site has just moved to a new address. The site is now hosted by Tony Firshman's company and should finally have enough space to merge all my web sites into one place as I get time to do this.

My web site has moved to <http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/index.html>

Please update your favourites (bookmarks) list.



The old site has a "forwarding" page pointing to the new site.

Text 87 Plus 4 Patch Program

Jochen Merz reports that Marcel Kilgus has fixed the problems raised by users on the mailing list when using the Text 87 Plus 4 patch program with Text 87 Plus 4 and QTP2 spell checker on QPC2. Version

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1.05 of plus4patch is available free of charge for registered users via Jochen's online updates page on his web site at:

<http://updates.i-m-s.com/>

Marcel described the fix on the mailing list as follows:

“The problem with the cursor not showing in alternative colour scheme is that what used to be black is now grey and what used to be white is now black. The cursor is done by XORing with white (which is now black). Of course, XORing with black doesn't change the colour! I've tried to include a workaround for this case.”

QSTRIPPER

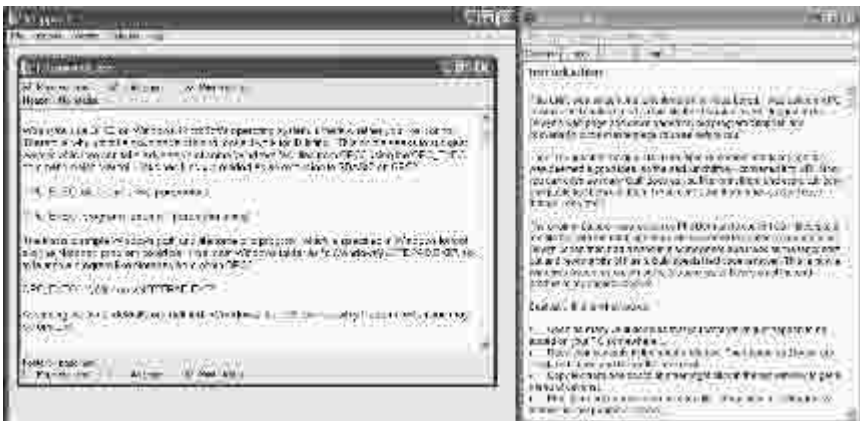
The source files for Norman Dunbar's Q-Stripper program, which lets you convert Sinclair QL word processing (Quill etc) documents to pdf, html, text and DocBook XML, is now available from the Sourceforge site at

<http://qstripper.sourceforge.net/>

The program binaries to run on Windows are available from

<http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/filetran/index.html>

as are earlier QDOS versions of Stripper.



Norman Dunbar's Q-Stripper for Windows in action

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The Sourceforge page where QStripper sources can be downloaded.

FAVICON

I have added a small package to my web site which shows you how to get a Favicon (favourites icon) displayed when your web page is displayed in some modern browsers. You may have noticed that when some sites like those of Marcel Kilgus and myself load, they display a QL or QPC or such icon in the title bar. In my case, loading my web site in recent Internet Exploders displays a little "QL" logo which can also be displayed when the site is placed in a favourites or bookmarks folder. Why do this? I just like to announce to the world that my site is a QL web site! Actually, you can blame Tony Firshman for this as I did it at his suggestion. Nonetheless, aspiring QL web site owners can get the icon and details of how to make your pages display it by downloading a small zip file from my web site at:

<http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/htmlutil/index.html>

If you'd like to see what it's like, just see the sample screen dump of my web site above.

[Dilwyn has also written an article on this subject which we will publish as soon as magazine space permits - Ed]

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UCONFIG News From George Gwilt

The latest version of UCONFIG, my program for producing config blocks for S*BASIC, C and assembler programs, contained mistakes in the assembler output.

This has been corrected and the new version is on my site:

<http://web.ukonline.co.uk/george.gwilt/>



Quo Vadis Design

Bruce Nicholls has set up a new online ordering web site, where he sells Jochen Merz's software products, and where you can subscribe to QL Today magazine now that Q-Branch are no longer taking new subscriptions. He also hopes to sell Dilwyn Jones's QL CDs. Bruce trades under the name Quo Vadis Design, and can accept payments by MasterCard, Visa, or PayPal via the web site, or by cheque by post if preferred. The ability to order online will of course make it easier for customers outside the UK to order QL products. Bruce's web site also includes a news blog, so you can see the latest Quo Vadis Design news on the site too.

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Chord-It

I've added a Guitar Chords Database program called Chord-It from Phillip Sproston to my web site.

It's written in SuperBASIC, was originally published by Quantum Soft in 1985 and there are two versions, the original being for QDOS systems, and a second version I've amended slightly to allow it to run on SBASIC systems like QPC.

It's available to download from

<http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/edu/index.html> (about 12K download).

Phillip has kindly given me some other games programs to release as freeware, which I'll add to the web site as soon as I get a chance to test them.



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Some sample screens from Chord-It, the guitar chords database

Geoff Wicks Postal Address



Geoff Wicks, editor of QL Today magazine

Due to mail going astray because of misunderstandings over his '5B Wordsworth Avenue' address (confusion between 5b, 56 and 58 of that street), QL Today Editor Geoff Wicks now requests that correspondence for his QL activities be addressed to 'Flat 5b' instead. In other words, all mail for Geoff Wicks should now go to:

Geoff Wicks, Flat 5b, Wordsworth Avenue, Derby, DE24 9HQ

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QL Games CD

This CD is a compilation of over 150 PD, freeware and shareware games for the QL, thought to be the first time that an all-games CD for the QL has been launched. The games are supplied in a large QXL.WIN file for systems able to handle that filing system, and as zipped files ready to copy to the target QL or compatible system. The CD costs just £5.00 from Dilwyn Jones. Further details of this and other QL CDs can be found at:

<http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/cdandsoft/index.html>

and can of course be ordered through Quo Vadis Design's online ordering system (see above).



Just Words! Web site

Geoff Wicks told us a few months ago that his web site provider was due to close down by February 15th of this year.

QL Today Subscription

We are approaching Volume 14 of QL Today. J-M-S is happy to continue, and Bruce Nicholls of Quo Vadis Design will take care of the UK delivery. You can subscribe by using this form (or a copy of it), or subscribe online via www.QLToday.com (the form can be downloaded), by email, letter, fax etc. ... we are very flexible!

I hereby subscribe to **QL Today** for 4 issues of Volume 14. The total price for all four issues is as follows, including postage and packing (depending on destination and time of renewal... early renewals get a discount!)

Destination:	price
Germany, Netherlands & United Kingdom	EUR 29.90
Rest of Europe	EUR 31.90
Rest of World (airmail)	EUR 42.90

Please charge my credit card: VISA MasterCard Diners Club
 [][][][][][][][][][][][][][][][] Expires [][] - [][]
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Money transfer to one of the following accounts:
 Deutschland: Jochen Merz, Account 493 50 431, Postbank Essen, BLZ 560 100 43
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Name: _____
 Street: _____
 Town: _____
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 Country: _____
 Email: _____

Date, Signature _____

Please fill in and send to Jochen Merz Software, Kaiser-Wilh-Str. 302, 47169 Duisburg, Germany,
 or fax to +49 203 501517 or scan & E-mail to SMSQ@J-M-S.com.

Back-issues of all Volumes of QL Today are also available. If you search for a specific issue, please let us know. If we do not have it, we will re-print it for you. If you want more back-issues, the per-issue price goes down as the postage plays a major part in the pricing. Even German back-issues are still available (from the first years of QL Today).

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In fact, there was a last minute takeover of the Tripod web service, resulting in the pages being maintained as the new owner took over from 16th February.

Shortly after the takeover it went through a difficult transition period with a few problems becoming apparent such as not working well in some resolutions on Internet Explorer. At the time of writing (end of April) all statistics on the site have disappeared. They have also changed the style of the advertising. This is now much better, but Geoff says he intends to make some minor design changes to get a better balance between advertising and content.

In short his web site has had a reprieve, but he says he can still not guarantee the long term future of the site, as he juggles his priorities.



Jochen Merz Software Is Also 25!

Jochen Merz Software was formed on the 2nd of May 1984 and so is also 25 years old!

To celebrate this, Jochen will be announcing some great deals in May, via his web site and via the next issues of QL Today.

Jochen's web site is at <http://SMSQ.J-M-S.COM> and his products can also be ordered via the new Quo Vadis Design web site in Britain, at

<http://www.ql-qvd.com/products.html>

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Jochen would also like to hear from anybody with interesting stories about JMS – he does not want to just write about himself to celebrate his 25 years in the QL business.

QUANTA readers will also be glad to hear that Jochen Merz has been offered (and accepted) honorary membership of QUANTA (together with Tony Firshman) for long service to the QL community!

uQLx Win-32

Phoebus Dokos reports that he has found some time to fiddle with uQLx-win32 (the version of the uQLx emulator for Windows) and although he did not manage to recompile it with the newest cygwin, he was, however, perfectly able to boot it properly. TCP/IP is not working but he figures that after Richard Zidlicky releases the newest version of the sources it should.

The latest distribution is available as a zipped or 7-zip file from Dilwyn Jones's Emulators page:

<http://www.dilwyn.me.uk/emu/index.html>

Scroll down to Win-UQLX and you can download a zipped package (about 270K) or a 7-zip archive (about 219K).

To be able to run the emulator, you'll need parts of the Cygwin distribution from www.cygwin.com, which provides a Linux-like environment for Windows. Phoebus says you'll need the Base and X-Org (or X11) parts of the package – be careful to follow his instructions for getting past the installer, don't just use the 'default' settings, make sure you change Default to Install for the parts you need by clicking on the word Default (it cycles round through Install, Uninstall, Reinstall, etc, often with quite a delay between clicks). Once installed, it adds a Cygwin entry in the Windows start menu. In this, start a Linux Bash Shell, then when that starts type startx to get things going, then you should be able to start the emulator.

It didn't work for me, but then you all know what I'm like with Windows, let alone introducing Linux-like things into the equation, so I'm sure everyone else will do just fine...

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uQLx

Regarding the original uQLx for Linux, Richard Zidlicky wrote about it on the ql-developers list in March. In his message (summarised below) he implied there may be a new version of uQLx sometime this year, once he's finished rewriting the build system:

“I am glad to see a recent surge of interest into the project and considering how to proceed.

“Technically there have been a number of important bug fixes, tweaks and compatibility fixes which ought to get out to the community.

“Lack of testing is the biggest problem for me - there were tons of changes not tested by anybody except me and anything is very unpolished at the moment as I am trying to rewrite the build system to support some advanced features. So whoever wants to compile right now will have a bunch of obstacles.

“Also I am trying not to break support for exotic hw/sw too much. What kinds of exotic configurations are still in use?

“The stone age copyright needs fixing. It should have been GPL or similar from the beginning but isn't and the issue will take time to resolve.”

The uQLx emulator web site is still at

http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Bay/2602/uqlx_main.html

A LITTLE MORE NOSTALGIA

Basil Lee

A Quommuniqué to QUANTA

First there was the ZX80. So they called the year 1980. The following year – ZX81. Add one. Forget 1982 (ZX Spectrum, games for kids) and skip to 1984, when Clive Sinclair promised us a computer for small businesses and schools. Predictably it was obsolete that year, the BBC – Babbage's Brilliant Calculator Mark 2 – having swept the board while we, the founder members of QUANTA in the February, waited impatiently for the QL, the device with the dongle, which arrived three months later, ready for inaction.

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Wrong. In the succeeding years QUANTA's geniuses have turned the machine into the all-singing all-dancing do-almost-everything now available to the sadly diminishing tally of enthusiastic members.

Over the years I failed to learn Sinclair Basic but accumulated a cupboard full of clever add-ons. Yes, that's where my QL languishes; I can't bear to part with it, and must admit that this is being written on a ^{PC}. Shhh.....

The London Subgroup has, over the years, operated in this or that room over a pub, usually moved on because we were too busy with ones and zeros to get into the drinking the landlords had hoped for. A church hall was more accommodating, until mammon overtook the accountant and the subscription was upped in a most unchristian manner.



Birman

Our membership naturally included the essential anorak, geek and nerd (you know who I mean) among the lady and gentlemen who hauled their gear along, eventually to the basement of the charming Welsh Chapel in Southwark Street. The friendly and helpful caretaker Noel took care of a splendid garden which grew up the front of his house, and of some cats. These included a beautiful Birman, and even my ailurophobic (look it up) wife drooled over him.

[This article was sent in by Basil Lee - who has looked after all the Back Issues of QUANTA Magazine for many years - in response to my appeal for nostalgic memories of the QL over the past 25 years. This appeal is ongoing - it's not too late to get your memories in print. Send them to me,

Editor@quanta.org.uk

or you can use any of the other contact methods to be found inside the front cover. I look forward to hearing from you. - Ed]

GWASS is an assembler which needs a 68020+ to run on. The early versions of the QL, those with Trump Card and early versions of QPC2 all used only the smaller instruction set of the 68000. In order that GWASS can be used to assemble programs which will run on the lower machines it is necessary that it be prevented from assembling 68020+ instructions. To this end I added, several years ago, the command `LOW_EA`. This can appear anywhere in a program. When it does GWASS acts as follows.

The whole program is assembled just as if `LOW_EA` had not been issued, but whenever it detects a 68020+ instruction which might have been a 68000 one, it issues the warning "68020+ EA used".

You can see from this that not all 68020+ instructions will be flagged. This is because GWASS works on the principle that a programmer knows what he is doing. Thus if a programmer uses the bit field instruction `BFEXTU (A4){3:14},D6` GWASS will just assemble this 68020+ instruction without batting an eyelid even though it has been ordered `LOW_EA`.

To understand how GWASS deals with the 68020+ instructions it is necessary to understand a little of its operation. As far as possible instructions are assembled completely when they are first encountered by GWASS. However, if an instruction contains a label whose value is undetermined at the time GWASS sets up a flag to deal with the instruction later when the value of the label is known. The instruction is partially assembled meanwhile. Those instructions containing effective addresses (EAs) will provisionally be assembled in the longest possible form. When GWASS has scanned all the instructions it compresses the code by replacing longer instructions by shorter ones where possible. If a long 68020+ instruction cannot be compressed to a 68000 one, GWASS issues the warning.

The compression applies also to branches. Branches which do not have a defined size are provisionally set to long, which is a 68020+ instruction. When the compression leaves such a branch long the warning is issued.

A slightly different approach applies to relocatable code. Obviously the value of any XREF label must remain unknown to GWASS. It is only when the assembled module is linked that its value is determined. Thus if the command `LOW_EA` is in operation GWASS assumes that any XREF label will give rise to an acceptable 68000 instruction. If this turns out in the event to be untrue it is the linker which will signal the error. This is no different from any assembler assembling only 68000 instructions.

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Examples

It might be easier to see how GWASS operates by looking at some examples.

1. move.l 300(a6,d0.l),d1

Here the instruction can be assembled straight away. GWASS does this without a murmur, even though it is a 68020+ EA. the programmer is expected to remember that 300 is too big for this instruction.

2. k equ 300
 move.l k(a6,d0.l),d1

Here, as in the first example, GWASS is able to assemble the instruction immediately and does so. The programmer is expected to realise that this will produce a 68020+ instruction.

3. move.l k(a6,d0.l),d1
 k equ 300

GWASS does not know whether k will be small enough to allow compression or not. Compression proves impossible and GWASS issues a warning. Here, the programmer is lucky in that the warning alerts him to the problem.

4. k1 nop
 k2 nop
 k3 equ 300+k2-k1
 move.l k3(a6,d0.l),d1

The label k3 contains two PC labels in its definition. PC labels are all regarded by GWASS as undetermined until compression has taken place. Thus in this case a warning is issued.

5. k1 nop
 ds.l \$C000
 bra k1

As in example 4 although the distance between the branch instruction and k1 would be known to the programmer, GWASS treats this as unknown until after compression and issues a warning.

This should show that, after all, GWASS can be used to produce 68000 friendly programs. It is interesting to note that GWASS itself can be run without crashing on a 68000 machine. It will announce that the machine is not 68020+ and stop. The first few instructions in GWASS are carefully chosen to be not 68020+.

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SUBGROUP MEETINGS

THE WEST MIDLANDS QL USER GROUP

This long-running group has moved back to its previous venue, the Queens Head pub in the City Centre. Meetings remain open to QUANTA members and non-members alike. The Queens Head is in Steelhouse Lane, Central Birmingham, four minutes walk from Snow Hill main-line railway station and has ample street parking nearby.

Meetings are usually on the first and third Monday of each month (but not on Bank holidays unless the previous one was cancelled for that reason). After your first meeting you're expected to pay £1 each time towards the organisation and monthly newsletter costs - except once a year when the group pays all those who attend a pound instead (We provide food twice a year for those who attend the AGM and the group's birthday party) and at meetings we discuss all sorts of things, QL-related and otherwise, usually from about 8:20 pm. onwards till 10:30 or later. The group owns QL hardware, a disk library and subscribes to relevant magazines. People can join the mailing list for £3.50 per year, even if they can't attend regularly.

The contact number is Mike Bedford White's, on 0121 605 4438, anytime after 11 am.

Email: mikebwhite@blueyonder.co.uk

QUANTA DORSET SUBGROUP

Meetings are held, on the second Sunday of each month at the Merley Community Centre in Harrier Drive, Merley, just south of Wimborne Minster. Time: 2.00 pm. to 5.00 pm. All are welcome.

John Meadows Tel: 01202 576189, or John Mason, 01425 275894.

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LONDON QL AND QUANTA GROUP

Meetings are held in the School Room, which is the basement of the Borough Welsh Congregational Chapel, 90, Southwark Bridge Road, London SE1. This is almost opposite the junction with Marshalsea Road, at the other end of which, 5 minutes walk away, is the Borough Underground Station. Free parking is easily available in Southwark Bridge Road for road users, Cyclists are welcome.

Members currently each pay a subscription of £30 per year towards the cost of the hire of the hall and a small additional charge is made for tea/coffee - biscuits are then provided free.

Please bring your QL equipment if possible, all types welcome, e.g., PC portable running emulators. The Group has some systems stored at the venue for its use. In addition, there are lots of donated second user equipment, books, magazines, etc, available for purchase.

Time: 2.00 pm. to 6.00 pm., on the second Sunday of the month.

No meetings are held in either December - winter break, or August summer break. Giving 10 meetings a year.

Malcolm Cadman: Tel: 020 8691 5780

email: QL@mcad.demon.co.uk

NEMQLUG - THE NORTH EAST MANCHESTER QL USER GROUP

Meetings are held at 181, Urmston Lane, Stretford, Manchester. M32 9EH (Near Junction 7 of M60 Motorway - Was Junction 7 M63 Motorway). Our informal meetings start at 7 p.m. and finish at 11 pm. All welcome.

Meets on the last Thursday of each month (except December).

John/Sarah Gilpin 0161-865 2872 (thegilpins@btopenworld.com)

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SCOTTISH QL USERS GROUP

SQLUG meets at George Gwilt's home every second Sunday in the month. Please contact George Gwilt before coming to get the location.

Gdgqler@gmail.com

SOLENT SUBGROUP

Meets at Botley Market Hall, all welcome. Park at the back and use side entrance.

1st Saturday of the month from 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm.

Graham Evans, Tel: 023 8040 3350.

SURREY QUANTA SUBGROUP (SQSG)

The group is currently trying other venues in the Leatherhead - Epsom area. If you plan to attend but do not get our emails, please phone or email Ken Bain for the latest location.

Meetings are 8.00 to 10.00 pm. On the last Wednesday of each month except December.

Ken Bain - 01932 - 347 432 (to midnight), kenb@bcs.org.uk

SUSSEX QL USER GROUP

Currently without a meeting place, anyone interested should contact Keith Mitchell or Roy Wood.

Roy Wood, 01273 430501 or Keith Mitchell, 01903 742263.

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RWAP SOFTWARE

3, Dale View Court, Fulford, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. ST11 9BA

Tel: +44(0)1782 398143

www.rwapsoftware.co.uk

www.rwapadventures.com

RWAP Software provide a wide range of software and hardware for the Sinclair QL, Cambridge Z88 and ZX Spectrum computers and continue to support and promote the Sinclair community well into the future.

As well as a wide range of software products (adventures, games, utilities, business software and a route finder), we also supply the SBASIC/SuperBASIC Reference Manual and a wide range of second hand hardware, software and books (from books on Quill through to Super Gold Cards).

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